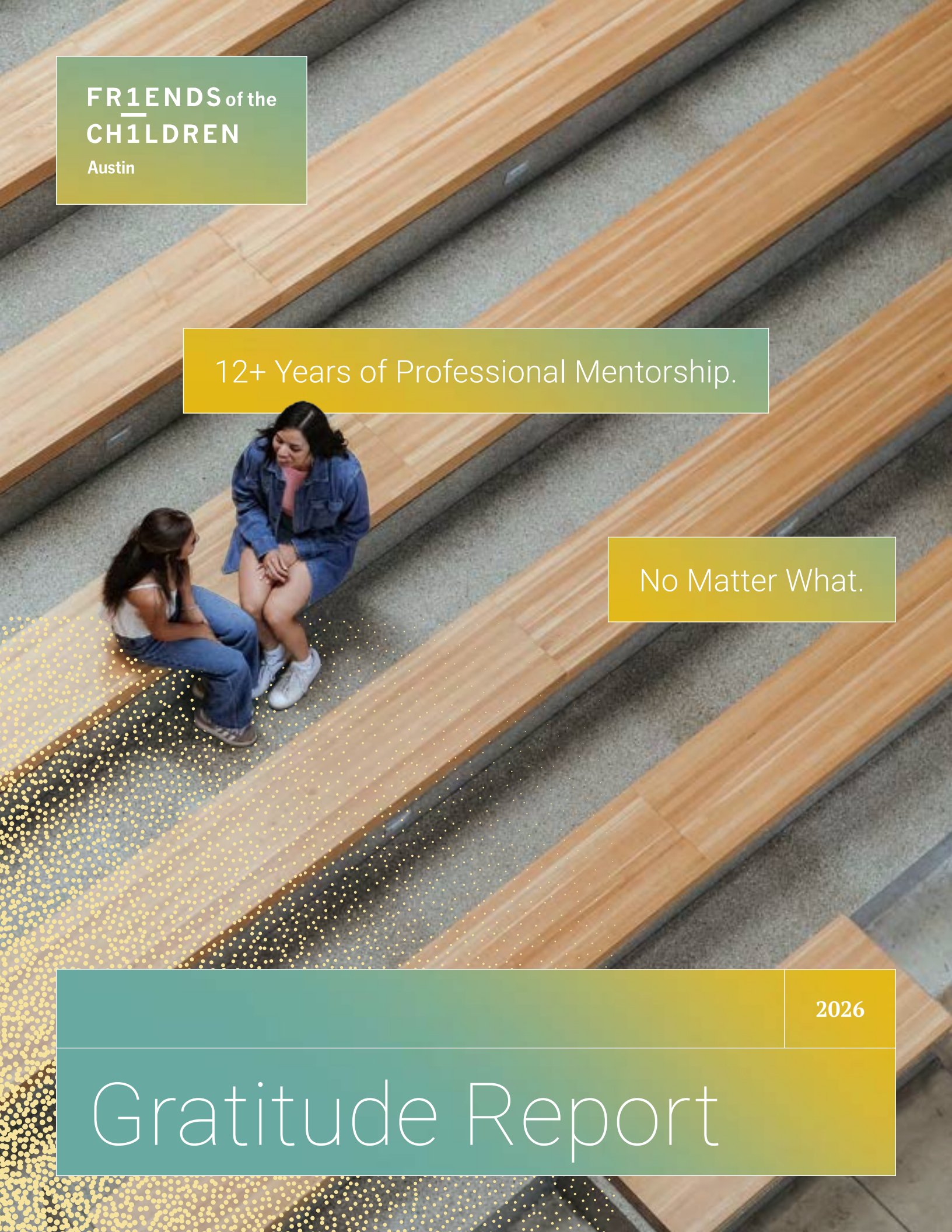




FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN

Austin

12+ Years of Professional Mentorship.

No Matter What.

2026

Gratitude Report



Dear Friends,

Every child deserves someone who believes in them long before the rest of the world does.

This belief is at the heart of everything we do at Friends Austin, and it is deeply personal to me. I grew up in a family that faced many of the same barriers our youth experience today, and caring adults who recognized my potential helped shape my future.

As the only Executive Director in the Friends of the Children network to also serve as a Friend, I am reminded every week that lasting change is built through consistency, trust and enduring relationships.

This year, those relationships reached remarkable milestones.

Our first cohort of youth graduated from eighth grade, an important step toward high school and the futures they are building. We also expanded our team of professional mentors, ensuring that more children across Austin have a dedicated adult committed to walking beside them for 12+ years.

We also strengthened our investment in literacy. What began as a summer initiative five years ago has evolved into a year-round intervention that helps children build reading skills, confidence, and a stronger foundation for lifelong learning.

These accomplishments represent far more than organizational growth. They represent children gaining opportunities, families finding support, and a community choosing to invest in relationships that last.

None of it would be possible without you.

Your generosity allows our Friends to be a consistent presence through every challenge, every milestone, and every celebration. Together, we are creating brighter futures for the 234 children served by our program this year and strengthening our community for generations to come.

Thank you for believing in our youth, investing in our mission, and making this work possible.



With gratitude,
Marilyn Manzo
Executive Director

Our Model

Friends Austin is dedicated to driving generational change. We empower youth facing great obstacles through relationships with professional mentors for 12+ years, no matter what.

We begin by listening and learning.

Children are referred to Friends Austin by trusted community partners. Before enrollment, we take time to understand each young person's strengths, challenges, and existing support system. Using a research-based assessment, we ensure that we are making our 12-plus-year commitment to the children we believe will benefit most from our long-term model.

We make a long-term commitment.

Friends Austin provides every young person with consistent, one-on-one mentorship from kindergarten through high school graduation. Through long-term relationships, youth get the encouragement and individualized support they need to discover their strengths, pursue their goals, and realize their full potential.

Every Friend is a full-time, salaried professional trained in child development and trauma-informed care. Friends spend time with youth each week at school, at home and throughout the community, building trusted relationships, advocating alongside families, and helping young people navigate opportunities and challenges.

We personalize the journey.

Together, Friends and youth create a personalized plan, called Roadmap Goals, built around each young person's strengths, interests, and aspirations. The Roadmap grows as youth grow, setting milestones that mark progress toward three long-term goals:

1 Graduate from high school with a plan for what's next.

2 Remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.

3 Delay parenting until after the teen years.

We Build Lifelong Strengths

Every interaction between a Friend and a young person is intentionally designed to strengthen nine Core Assets. These social and emotional skills help youth build healthy relationships, navigate challenges, and prepare for adulthood.

	Belonging		Problem Solving
	Positive Relationship Building		Self Management
	Find Your Spark		Perseverance and Grit
	Self Determination		Hope
	Growth Mindset		

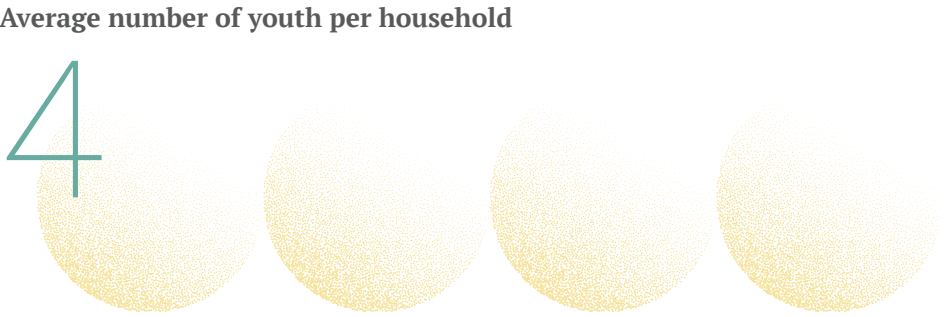
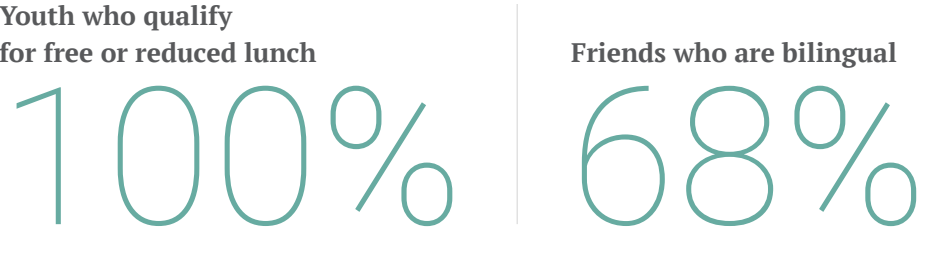


The Friend Effect

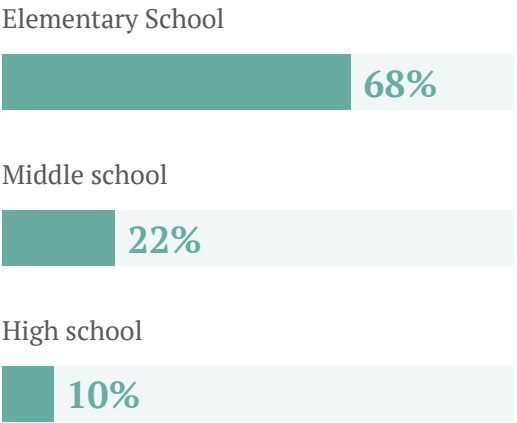
For 30+ years, Friends of the Children has measured the impact of consistent, professional mentorship. The data is clear: long-term relationships change lives.



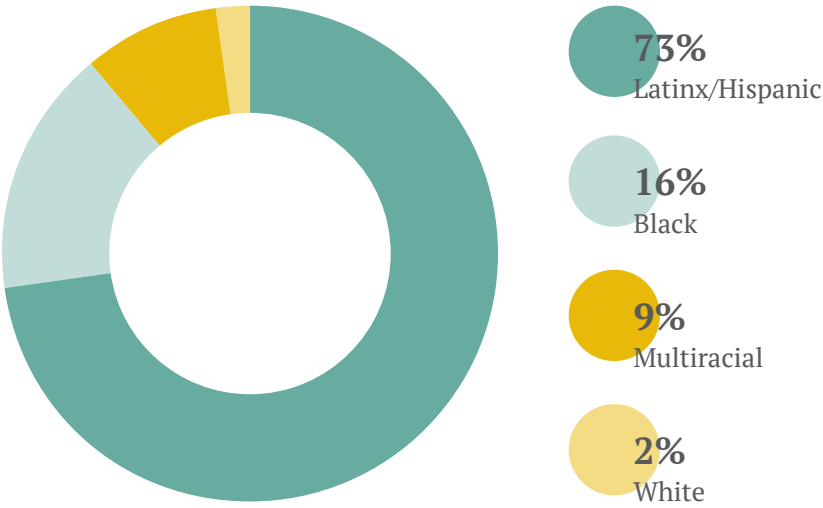
2026 By the Numbers



School Age Breakdowns



Youth Demographics



Youth living in a single-caregiver household

70%

Youth impacted by the child welfare system

51%

Youth born to a teen parent

49%

The Space Between the Noise



Artavious is quiet and thoughtful, the kind of child who takes a moment before answering a question.

But once he feels comfortable, a grin spreads across his face, usually followed by a laugh. By the time his mentor, Jodie, arrives to pick Artavious up for their outing, the house is alive with the energy of the third grader and his two siblings.

Jodie, affectionately called Coach Jodie, knows exactly how to find that laugh. It usually starts with an inside joke about Artavious eating so much Chick-fil-A that he'll turn into a Chick-fil-A someday. Artavious rolls his eyes every time, then laughs anyway.

A former professional basketball player who now coaches young athletes across Central Texas, Jodie brings plenty of his own energy. He joined Friends Austin in 2025 and became a Friend to Artavious and seven other boys.

Years of coaching have taught him something that has little to do with sports. Not every child needs more encouragement. Some simply need more room to be themselves.

So while their adventures include action movies, football practice and even an ill-fated attempt at rock climbing, the destination is rarely the point—the quiet is. The important moments often happen during the drive across town, when Artavious can ask a question, choose the movie, or simply have an adult's undivided attention.

Those ordinary moments carry the lessons Coach Jodie most wants to teach. Independence, he believes, is not something children discover the day they turn 18. It is built one experience at a time: trying something new, ordering your own meal, facing a fear, and learning that the world is bigger than your neighborhood and that you belong in it.

Last school year, when Artavious was in the second grade, he gravitated toward art class, where he drew dinosaurs, worked with clay, and found a place that felt familiar. He looked forward to P.E., especially on Freeze Tag days. His art teacher patiently helped him practice writing his name until it looked just right. And there was Malachi, the proudly “weird” friend who made the art room and the rest of the school feel familiar.

This summer, Artavious's school was one of 10 Austin public schools that closed, leaving him with a new set of unknowns to navigate as he started third grade.

He started his year in unfamiliar territory, with strange hallways, different teachers, and new friendships waiting to be built. While so much around him has changed, one thing has remained consistent.

He can always depend on Coach Jodie to show up for him.

The jokes are the same, and the laughter comes just as easily. The duo's weekly adventures continue, each one creating another pocket of quiet where Artavious can think, talk, and be himself. And when he walked into a school he did not know yet, he knew Coach Jodie would be there to hear how the first day went.

The Other Half of the Equation

Every child at Friends Austin is paired with a professional mentor for 12+ years. That support increasingly extends to the caregivers raising them.

Caregivers carry an enormous weight, balancing work, parenting, finances, schools, and systems that are difficult to navigate. They are resourceful and determined, but rarely have extra time or someone in their corner.

One year ago, Friends Austin expanded the model to reach caregivers, adding our first Family Engagement Specialist.

Linda adapts our “no-matter-what” approach to caregivers. Her work begins with trust, which can take months to build, and follows each family’s priorities rather than a standard checklist.

At the heart of Linda’s work is a belief that no two families need the same kind of support because no two families face the same challenges. Rather than following a checklist or prescribing solutions, Linda listens first, then follows the caregiver’s lead and steps in wherever they see the greatest need.

Support can mean navigating paperwork, accessing the Family Emergency Fund, arranging a food pantry delivery, or helping a family find the resources they need to feel more stable at home.

Food security is one of the most common needs families raise. In November 2025, when a federal government shutdown temporarily disrupted SNAP benefits, many of the families we walk alongside faced sudden uncertainty about how they would feed their families. Our family engagement program and our community of supporters raised \$120,000 to bridge the gap. The funds went directly to the families in our program for groceries.

With over 20 years of family engagement work, Linda has found that the biggest misconception about families experiencing poverty is that they do not want help. What she sees instead are caregivers deeply invested in their children’s futures and willing to do whatever it takes to build a better life. As Linda puts it, “If someone didn’t care, they wouldn’t invite an organization of strangers into the most personal parts of their lives.”

Linda’s work stands on the relationships our professional mentors build with families over the years. Just as every child has a Friend walking beside them, caregivers have someone walking beside them, too.

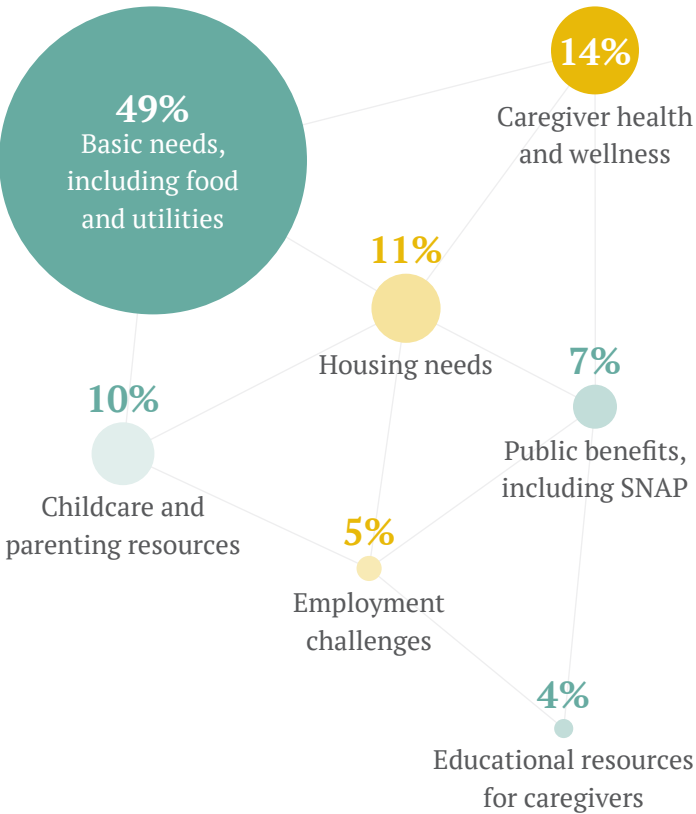
The addition of Linda deepens our ongoing commitment to supporting caregivers. With a dedicated person focused on the needs of families, Friends can spend less time navigating immediate challenges and more time doing what they do best: showing up consistently for their youth. It means stronger support for families and greater capacity for Friends to be fully present for the young people they walk alongside.

In her first year, Linda has worked with nearly 40% of the families in our program, extending our long-term commitment beyond the child to the people raising them.



630 hours

of family support focused on



20%

of family support hours were spent addressing high-priority challenges such as eviction notices.

\$48,113

distributed to families from the Emergency Fund to support basic needs such as rent, utilities, and counseling.

Timeline of Events

October



House Beautiful

Friends Austin was selected as the nonprofit partner for House Beautiful's 2025 Whole Home Tour. Proceeds from community tours and furniture sales supported our long-term professional mentoring program.



November

Fall Festival

Youth, families, Friends, and supporters gathered in costume for games and community.



December

Slay Bells, Jammies at Sammie's

Supporters rang in the holiday season at our third annual Slay Bells, Jammies at Sammie's fundraiser with a festive pajama luncheon supporting our mission.

2026

March



The Big Pickle

Our fourth annual pickleball tournament welcomed 80+ teams for a day of spirited competition in support of Friends Austin.



Dinner with Friends

Our eighth annual gala raised more than \$1.3 million to ensure more Austin youth can build life-changing relationships with Friends.



Eighth-Grade Graduation

Our first cohort of youth graduated from eighth grade, a milestone marking the start of their path toward high school graduation.



Summer Carnival

Youth and families celebrated summer with food, games, and prizes at our annual carnival.

May

May

July

2025

Youth Referral Partners

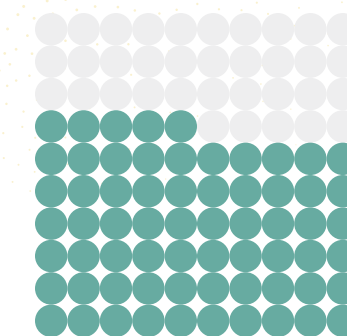
Children's long-term outcomes are often shaped by overlapping challenges rather than a single circumstance.

Our referral partners identify young people facing barriers like persistent poverty, housing instability, family disruption, educational setbacks, and limited access to supportive relationships.

Friends Austin works with educators, counselors, social workers, and advocates who know their communities well. Together, we identify children who benefit most from long-term professional mentorship.

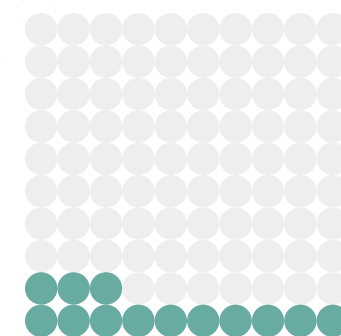


Share of referrals by partner:



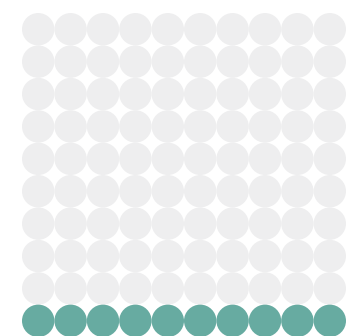
65%

**Austin
Independent
School District**



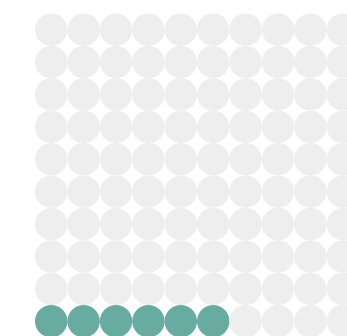
13%

**CASA of
Travis County**



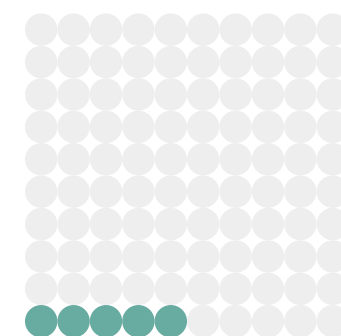
10%

**Center for Child
Protection**



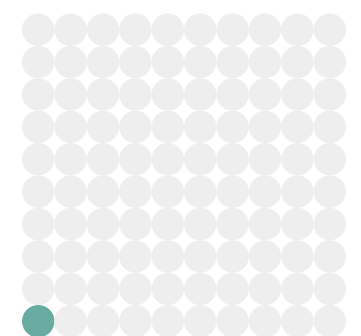
6%

**Saint Louise
House**



5%

Salvation Army



1%

**Casey Family
Programs**

Knowing Someone

Ask Silvana to describe Ashley, and she does not have to think for long.

She's curious. She'll try just about anything once. She is outspoken, fearless, and stands up for her friends without hesitation.

Those observations accumulated over eight years, as Ashley grew from an energetic six-year-old into a teenager preparing for high school.

Silvana can still picture their first outing to Thinkery. It was Ashley's first day with her new Friend, and Silvana's first day as a professional mentor. Another family had entrusted her with one of the most important people in their lives, and Silvana was convinced she was getting everything wrong until Ashley asked, "When do I get to see you again?"

In that moment, Silvana found her calling. Over the eight years that followed, Ashley has served as a constant reminder of that calling. They fill their weekends and evenings with museums, dance classes, sports and swimming lessons. Ashley rarely needs any convincing to try something new, always up for a new experience.

Today, Ashley has her own shorthand for knowing Silvana.

Before they decide what to do that day, Ashley asks about dance class. She wants an update on the dogs. Lately, she has become curious about powerlifting and wants to know how Silvana's training is going. Their conversations no longer feel like a mentor checking in with a child. They sound like two people picking up where they left off last week.

Today, Silvana looks at Ashley and sees the confidence she wishes she had at that age. Watching her grow has also been a reminder of why consistency matters. Growth rarely arrives all at once. It shows up over the years, after trust is built and experiences accumulate, in the presence of someone who keeps showing up. It is a privilege, Silvana says, to have watched it from the beginning.

This fall, Ashley walked into high school for the first time with new teachers, classmates, and routines. Yet the Friend beside her is the same one she has had since she was in kindergarten.

Over the next four years, Silvana and Ashley will spend countless hours together, and each visit will start the way it usually does, with questions about the dogs, dance class, or whatever new interest Ashley has picked up since they last saw each other.

When asked what advice she would give Ashley as she starts high school, Silvana does not talk about grades or fitting in. She offers a simple reminder:

Don't dim your light.
Keep being exactly
who you are.

Ashley is one of more than 20 youth who entered high school this fall, the first class of freshmen in Friends Austin's history.

Meet more members of this cohort in our companion video and discover how long-term relationships have helped shape their journey.



Community Resources and Partners

Breaking the cycle of generational poverty takes an entire community. From schools and nonprofits to local businesses and civic leaders, our partners help remove barriers and open doors for the youth and families we serve. Together, we are working to ensure every young person has the support they need.



Waived admission so youth could experience art and culture.



Donated books that expanded the Friends Austin Clubhouse library.



Led financial literacy workshops covering budgeting, banking, and future financial decisions.



Hosted fire station tours and safety education that introduced youth to emergency services and taught practical life-saving skills.



Developed and led the Longhorn Literacy initiative with Friends Austin, bringing research-based literacy support to elementary-aged youth.



Provided opportunities for outdoor activities through their Camacho Activity Center.



Led Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) training that strengthened the skills of Friends Austin staff.



Donated tickets to performances throughout the season, introducing youth to the performing arts.



Conducted individualized dyslexia evaluations and offered educational guidance to help youth access appropriate learning support.



Delivered culturally responsive literacy and STEAM programming that kept youth engaged in learning throughout the summer.



Hosted tours of the Gardner Betts Juvenile Justice Center and led educational sessions that helped Friends Austin staff better understand the juvenile justice system and how to support youth navigating it.



Awarded scholarships that gave youth access to strength and fitness programs.



Led music therapy sessions that helped youth build confidence and express themselves through music.



Discounted admission to Austin's hands-on STEAM museum for Friends Austin youth and families.



Partnered with Friends Austin to strengthen literacy initiatives across the program.



Hosted STEM camps and hands-on learning experiences that encouraged girls to explore technology, media, and creative careers.



Led specialized training that equipped Friends Austin staff to better support youth with special education needs.



Donated tickets to performances and special events.



Refurbished and donated bicycles for youth, expanding transportation options and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles.



SHINE at Trinity Episcopal School opened its bilingual summer camp to Friends Austin youth at no cost.



The World Opens With Reading

For the first few years of elementary school, children are taught to read. By third grade, the equation begins to reverse. Reading becomes the tool through which much of the rest of school is delivered.

A science experiment begins with written instructions. A math problem starts with understanding the words on the page. When literacy falls behind, every subject becomes harder, and the gap can widen with each passing year.

At Friends Austin,
literacy is the foundation
on which the rest of a
child's learning is built.

Every youth in our program completes nationally recognized literacy assessments three times a year. The results help us identify where a child needs support and build an individualized learning plan.

Guiding this work is Literacy Project Manager Veronica Reyes-Leal, a former bilingual elementary educator. She oversees assessments, learning plans, tutor coaching and instruction.

Through a partnership with Dr. Monica Romero and the University of Texas at Austin's School of Educational Psychology, Friends Austin developed **Longhorn Literacy**, which pairs education students with youth who need additional support. Tutors provide one-on-one instruction twice a week during the school year.

Book Camp extends that individualized support through the summer, helping children maintain progress and build confidence as readers. Together, Longhorn Literacy and Book Camp create a year-round continuum of support that keeps children moving forward.

Benchmark scores matter, and the effects often reach past literacy itself. Veronica recalls one young participant who communicated almost entirely through nods, gestures, and written responses. As weeks of individualized tutoring turned into months, trust grew alongside reading skills. The child began speaking with tutors, asking questions, and finding the confidence to use a voice that had been quiet for a long time. Literacy work is rarely only about decoding words. It is about helping children believe they have something worth saying.

This year, 21 youth received individualized intervention through Longhorn Literacy, and 55 participated in Book Camp.

Improving literacy skills remains a core priority for Friends Austin. Today, 62% of Friends Austin youth are reading well below benchmark levels, underscoring both the need for continued support and the opportunity in front of us. Through year-round literacy instruction focused on building reading skills and summer programming designed to protect that progress, we are working toward a clear goal: helping every youth strengthen their skills and move closer to reading at the level expected for their age.

When children learn to read with confidence, the classroom becomes a place to participate rather than observe.

Every book becomes
an invitation, and every
opportunity feels a little
more within reach.

During Book Camp, I watched one young reader grow more confident with every passing week. On our last day together, he told me with the biggest smile that he had started reading at home and now reads the names of street signs and stores whenever he's in the car. In that moment, I realized reading was no longer just an assignment for him. It had become part of his everyday life.

Letticia – Summer Book Camp Tutor

95%

of Book Camp youth maintained
or improved their literacy skills

100%

of Longhorn Literacy youth
improved their literacy scores

Freddy & Roberto

The Heart of a Big Brother



The afternoon unfolded at Roberto's pace. But Freddy, his mentor of four years, never tried to slow things down. He simply kept up.

The agenda was as follows: homemade pizza, two fiercely competitive games of Uno, and freshly baked double chocolate cookies.

And just before heading out the door, Roberto had one more mission. Cookie tray in hand, he made his way through the Friends Austin Clubhouse, making sure each staff member got one before he left with Freddy. Afterward, it sunk in that everything, from pizza to Uno to cookies, had happened in less than 20 minutes.

The whirlwind was unmistakably Roberto. So was the kindness.

Four years ago, Roberto was a quiet fourth grader who spoke mostly Spanish and often blended into the background. It is hard to imagine where that quiet fourth grader went. "He doesn't see himself as the small guy anymore," Freddy says. "He sees himself just as big, and just as loud, as any of his peers."

During the summer, their outings often begin wherever Roberto's parents are working that day, turning different parts of Austin into the starting point for what Freddy calls their "sideways adventures." A pickup across town might lead to a new neighborhood, restaurant, or activity that neither has tried before.

For Freddy, those unexpected detours have become some of his favorite memories. "It's really fun to share a few firsts when we rediscover Austin," he says. Competition follows them everywhere. A walk to the library can become a race, which is why Freddy jokes that he keeps running shoes in his car just in case.

The energy that fuels Roberto through every game also shapes the way he shows up for the people he loves, especially his younger sisters. One of them, Kristal, is also matched with a professional mentor through Friends Austin. While Kristal's Friend Samantha supports her through her own journey, Roberto has embraced the role of a proud and protective big brother.



When Roberto and Kristal attended the same after-school program, they were assigned to separate groups. Freddy remembers how often they still found each other across the room, usually ending in a conversation or hug before the staff sent them back.

It wasn't exactly following the rules, but Freddy couldn't miss what it revealed about their relationship. At an age when many older siblings began putting more distance between themselves and their younger siblings, Roberto kept moving toward Kristal. And she was always just as eager to find him.

After years of mentorship, Freddy sees a mentor emerging in Roberto himself. He looks out for his sisters, has a strong sense of fairness, and notices when someone is being bullied or left out.

As Roberto prepares for eighth grade, Freddy's role is changing too. When they first met, Roberto needed help finding his courage and discovering his voice. Now, their conversations are about how he wants to use both. Roberto is becoming more aware of the challenges facing his family and his community, and he wants to understand how he can help.

Freddy smiles when he talks about what Roberto has taught him in return. "I learned that there's always space to play on our way to work," he says.

Somewhere in the middle of all that motion, Roberto has grown into someone who takes up space, looks out for others, and knows where he wants to go next.

Proven in Austin

In 2018, Friends Austin commissioned an independent return-on-investment study to estimate the long-term community value of helping children reach three milestones.

1. Graduate From High School

Children growing up in poverty face significantly greater barriers to graduating from high school.

48% of Hispanic youth and 67% of Black youth living in poverty are likely to drop out of school.

90% of our youth graduate from high school.

\$308,000
the lifetime value created for Austin.

2. Delay Parenting Until Adulthood

Teen parenthood is associated with lower educational attainment and reduced long-term economic mobility.

49% of Hispanic youth and 54% of Black youth living in poverty are likely to become teen parents.

95% of our youth wait until after their teen years to start a family.

\$271,000
the lifetime value created for Austin.

3. Avoid Juvenile Justice Involvement

Youth facing the greatest obstacles enter the juvenile justice system at disproportionate rates.

13% of Hispanic youth and 20% of Black youth living in poverty are likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.

96% of our youth avoid the juvenile justice system.

\$153,000
the lifetime value created for Austin.



The Austin Return

\$732,000

the estimated lifetime value to Austin when one young person reaches all three milestones.

\$180,000

the approximate cost of providing 12+ years of professional mentorship.

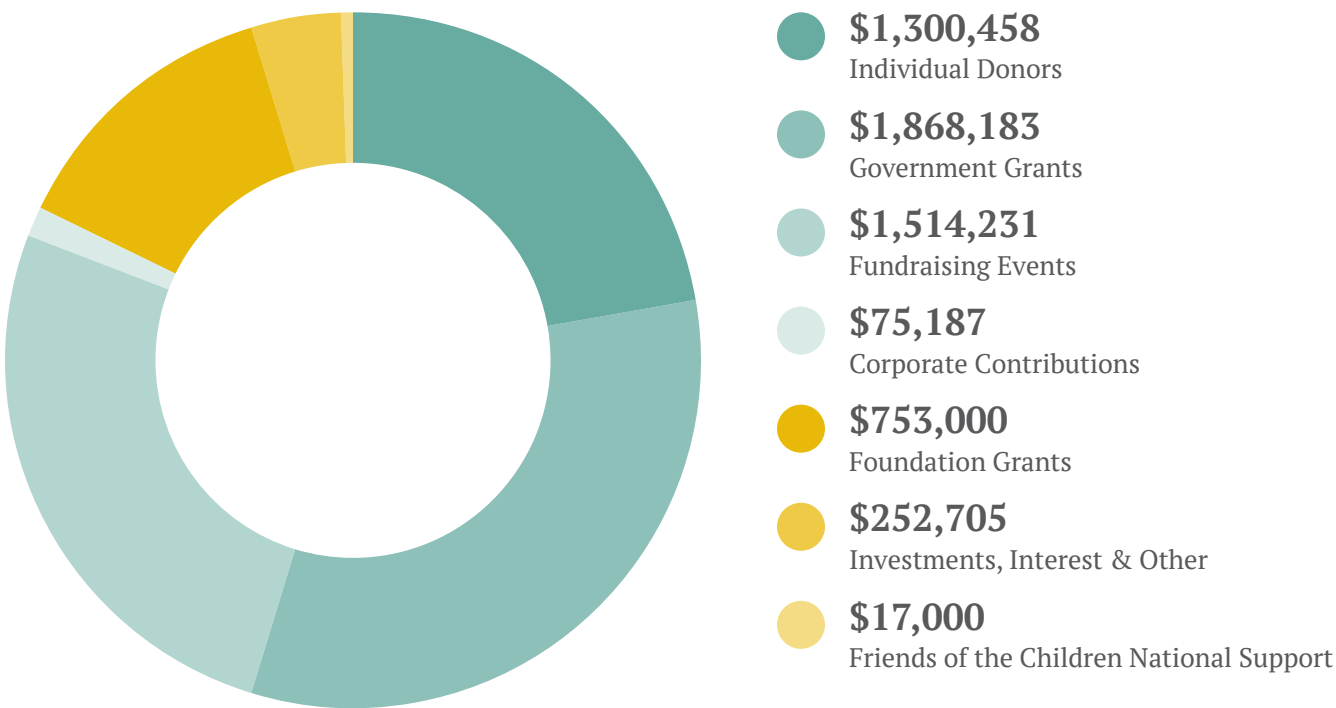
\$1=\$4

Every dollar invested in Friends Austin generates an estimated \$4 in long-term value for the Austin community.

2026 Financials

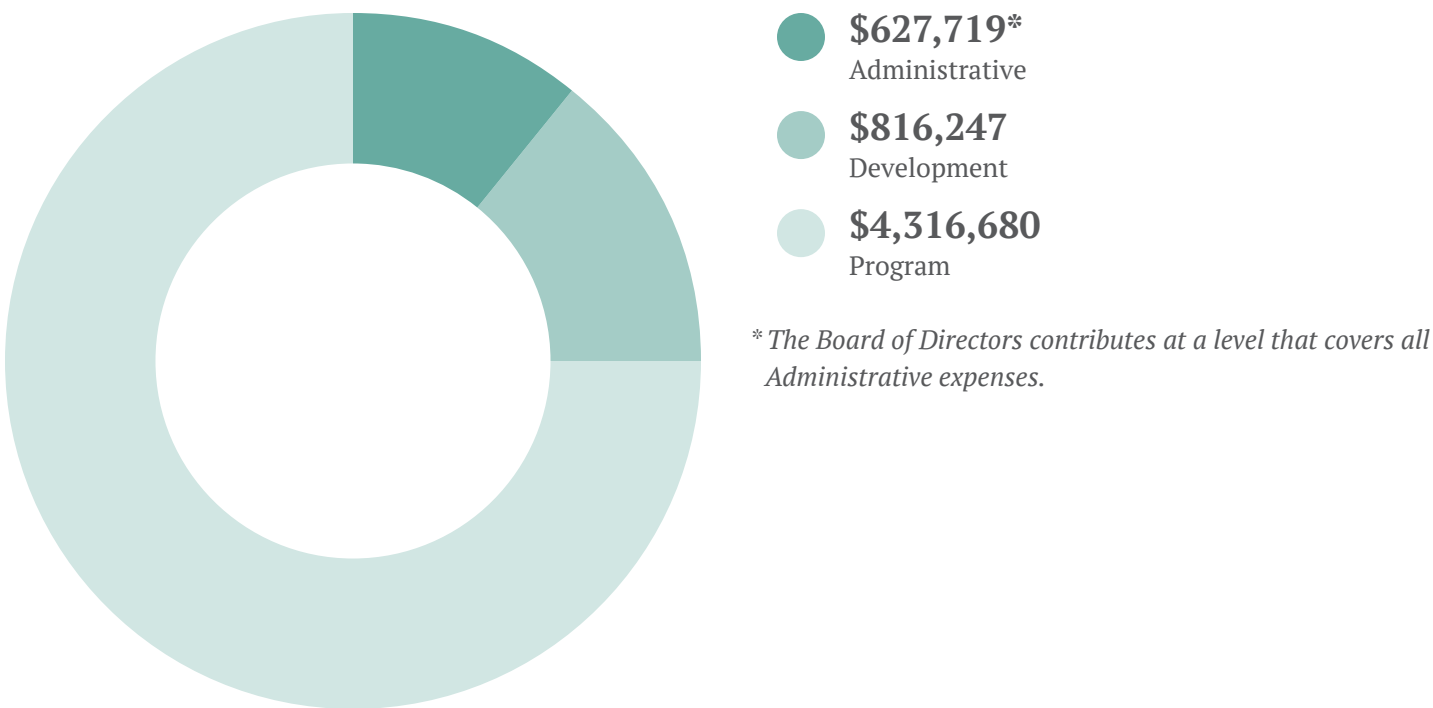


Revenue Total: \$5,780,766



The 2026 financials include \$158,089 in funds raised for the Friends Austin Family Emergency Fund. Due to the lapse of SNAP Benefits in Fall 2025, we raised additional funds from individuals and companies to support the families we serve during a time of critical need.

Expenses Total: \$5,760,646



Donor Listings

THANK YOU! Friends Austin is incredibly grateful for each member of the community who chose to support our mission through generous contributions in fiscal year 2025-2026.

\$500,000+

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
The WoodNext Foundation,
a fund of a donor-advised fund program

\$250,000-\$499,999

Anonymous

\$100,000-\$249,999

Emily and David Breach
Janet Harman and Kent Mayes

\$50,000-\$99,999

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\$25,000-\$49,999

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\$5,000-\$9,999

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\$2,500-\$4,999

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Sarah Clark
Marjorie Clifton
Tien Do
Regina and Stephen Foster
Andrea and Rogan Giles
Manny Gonzalez
Adam and Sarah Greene
Lori Hart
Carrie and Robert Hicks
Taylor Houser
Melanie Wells and Dennis Ippolito
Megan and Will Jenkins
Mary Jones
KC Kitchen
Kelly and Matt Klingaman
Ashli and Casey Knust
Talla Kuperman
Elizabeth and Justin Nelson
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Shelley and Curtis Page
Abby Pesek
Alyssa and Andy Reese
Salt Lick BBQ
Stefanie Scott and Ruchit Shah
Jan Slagter
Jennifer and Rusty Stein
Pam Friedman and Mitch Sundet
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Jenn Walker

\$1,000-\$2,499

Nadine Abramcyk
Albert Hotel
American Constructors Foundation
AthleX

Austin Proper
Jordan and Connor Atchley
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Lauren and Chris Ballard
Laura and John Beckworth
Kelsay and Bruce Bentley
Blair Bonilla
Roslyn Breen
Marissa and Steve Brown
C3 Presents
Julia Cheek
Lindsey Christopher
Commodore Perry Estate
Clinic Concierge
Betty Jean Craige
David Kurio Designs
Jade and Jake DeKinder
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Caroline Weir Dixon
Beau and Bryant Dowd
Flora Fetish
Lulu Flores
Carolyn Franks
Brooke and Pete Freeland
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Hayley Gilbert
Caroline and Kirk Goehring
Jake Goena
Richard Goodall
Elle Moody and Jimmy Gray
Laura and Connor Greissing
Lisa Apfelberg and Eric Griesdorf
Emma and Geoff Hackett
Eleanor and Chad Hallmark
Jessica and Lou Hargest
Misty Hasiotis
Katie Hastings
Hat Creek Burger Company
Shelly and James Heflin
Jessica Sherrets and Ryan Higgins
Anne Hunt
Incline P&C Group
Pauline Johnson
Thomas Johnston
Iris Jones
Ananth Kasturiraman
Kay and John Kingsbury
Korman
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Catherine and Scott Worley
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Victoria Rios and Wayne Young
Catherine Zaruba

Our Staff

Lasting relationships begin with people who stay.

At Friends Austin, we believe children deserve Friends who will still be there eight or 12 years down the road. Hiring for that kind of commitment shapes everything about how we build our team.

We recruit thoughtfully and invest in the people we hire through competitive compensation, comprehensive benefits, leadership development and wellness initiatives. These efforts create a workplace where talented professionals can

build a career rather than pass through. Over the past nine years, Friends Austin has maintained an average employee retention rate of 87%. Every employee who chooses to stay represents another opportunity for a child to experience the consistency that makes a difference.

As we continue to grow, we remain committed to attracting exceptional professionals who believe lasting change is built through lasting relationships.



Staff members from left to right:

First row: Linda A. Torres, Jodie McGarity Jr., Juan Casanova, Roland Reyes, Marilyn Manzo, Sierra Peavy, Daphne M. Jones, Keisha Fulton, Luis Maldonado, Ritsel Chukwuma, Wayne Young, Oliver Ramirez, Michael Sanchez, Veronica Reyes-Leal, Lupe Galindo

Second Row: Deyanira Isassi-Velasco, Kay Foos, Hector G. Garcia Jr., Marisa Ignacio, Jose Ortiz, Freddy Vigil-Zavaleta, Morgan Belveal, Treasure Thomas, Michelle Monroe, Rebeca Saavedra, Tiffany Dennis, Adrian Cavazos, Alexandria Ruiz, LaDonna Davis, Caroline Page Groves, Catherine Worley

Third Row: Abbey Hernandez, Cathryn Johnson, Emma Lake Boydston, Anders Allison, Marlene Garcia, Jimena Zavala, Silvana Granados, Jasmine Glover, Sherell Johnson, Mary Isabel Sales, Samantha Escamilla, Marco Bustamante, Alex Torres, Jonathan Valencia



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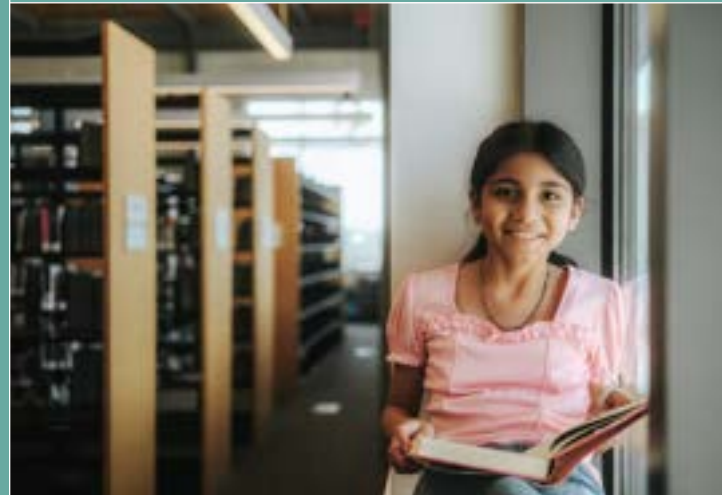
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Radney Wood

Partner | Vela Wood

Dear Friends of Friends Austin,



In a world that often offers quick fixes, Friends Austin promises long-term commitment. We believe lasting change comes from consistency, trust, and enduring relationships.

That belief shapes every decision we make, from how we support children and families to how we invest in our people, strengthen our programs, and plan for the future.

At the core of Friends Austin is a commitment that few organizations can make. We begin walking alongside children in kindergarten and remain by their side for 12+ years because we know the challenges many young people face cannot be solved overnight.

By 2030, Friends Austin will serve children across all grades, from kindergarten through 12th grade, and celebrate the graduation of its first cohort that completes their entire educational journey with the organization.

Friends Austin is now the third-largest chapter in a national network of 45 chapters, supported by a community of donors, mentors, partners, and advocates committed to the mission.

While my role as Board Chair is coming to an end, my commitment to Friends Austin is not. I look forward to

continuing to champion this mission and support the organization however I can as we write the next chapters together.

Whether you've been part of Friends Austin for years or are just getting to know our mission, thank you for believing in the power of long-term relationships and in what becomes possible when we invest in children for the long haul.



With gratitude,

Jessica Leggett

Board Chair



The future is bright.

FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN
Austin

2026



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